

VERTIGO

WILLINGHAM BUCKINGHAM LEIALOHA

F A B L E S



THE
GOOD
PRINCE

No.

63

Sep 07
suggested for
mature readers
verfigocomics.com

WOLF VALLEY,
DUE EAST
OF THE FARM.

IT'S NOT
JUST A BUILD-UP.
I BELIEVE A STATE OF
WAR ALREADY EXISTS
BETWEEN THE EMPIRE
AND FABLETOWN.

WOLF MANOR.

THOUGH I DON'T
BELIEVE IT'S IN ANYONE'S
BEST INTEREST YET TO LET THE
MUNDYS KNOW OF WHAT'S
HANGING OVER THEIR
HEADS.

AND
WHAT'S OUR
PLAN?

HOME

Chapter
Four of
The
Good
Prince

In which many plans are made
and diverse people are called
home, while others are already
on their way there.

Bill
Willingham
writer - creator

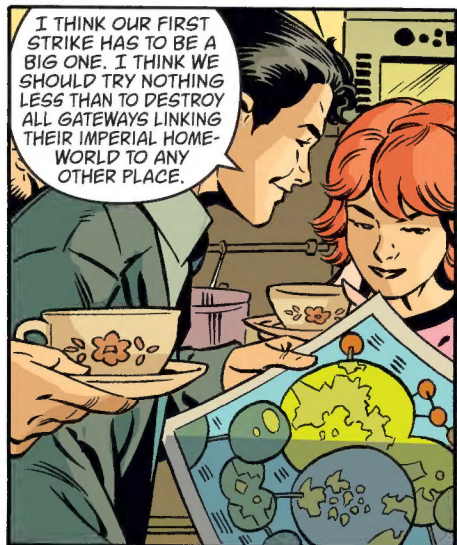
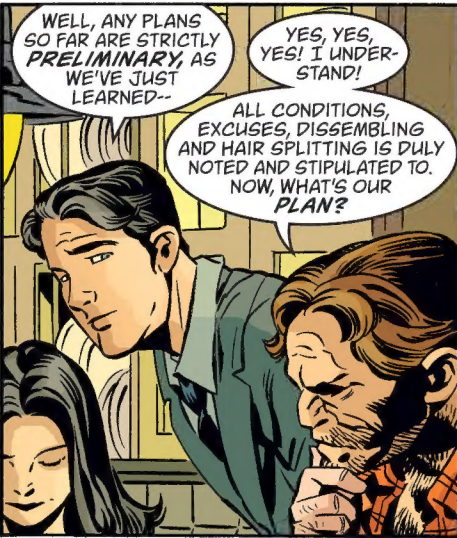
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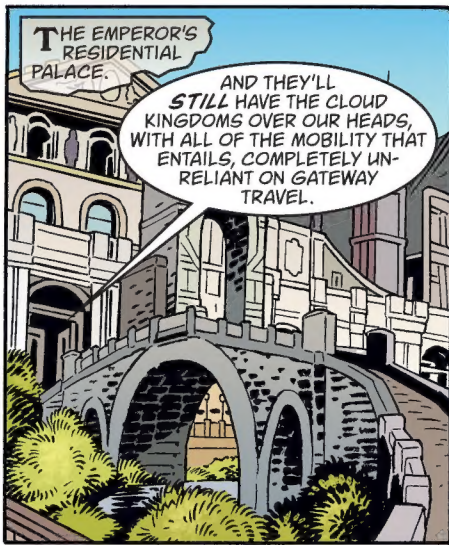
THE IMPERIAL CITY, IN THE HOMELANDS.

THE GATEWAYS ARE CERTAINLY OUR MOST VULNERABLE TARGETS. IF WE LOSE THEM, WE EFFECTIVELY LOSE THE EMPIRE.



THE EMPEROR'S RESIDENTIAL PALACE.

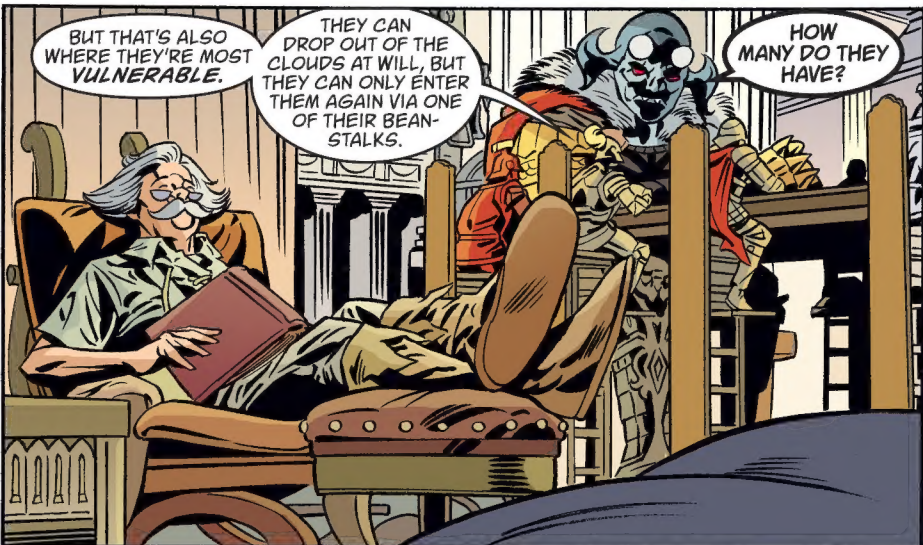
AND THEY'LL STILL HAVE THE CLOUD KINGDOMS OVER OUR HEADS, WITH ALL OF THE MOBILITY THAT ENTAILS, COMPLETELY UNRELIANT ON GATEWAY TRAVEL.



BUT THAT'S ALSO WHERE THEY'RE MOST VULNERABLE.

THEY CAN DROP OUT OF THE CLOUDS AT WILL, BUT THEY CAN ONLY ENTER THEM AGAIN VIA ONE OF THEIR BEAN-STALKS.

HOW MANY DO THEY HAVE?



HOW MANY MAGIC BEANS?

WE DON'T KNOW, SIR. I ONLY KNOW THAT THEY'RE RARE. WE'VE YET TO FIND ANY OF OUR OWN, THROUGHOUT THE EMPIRE.





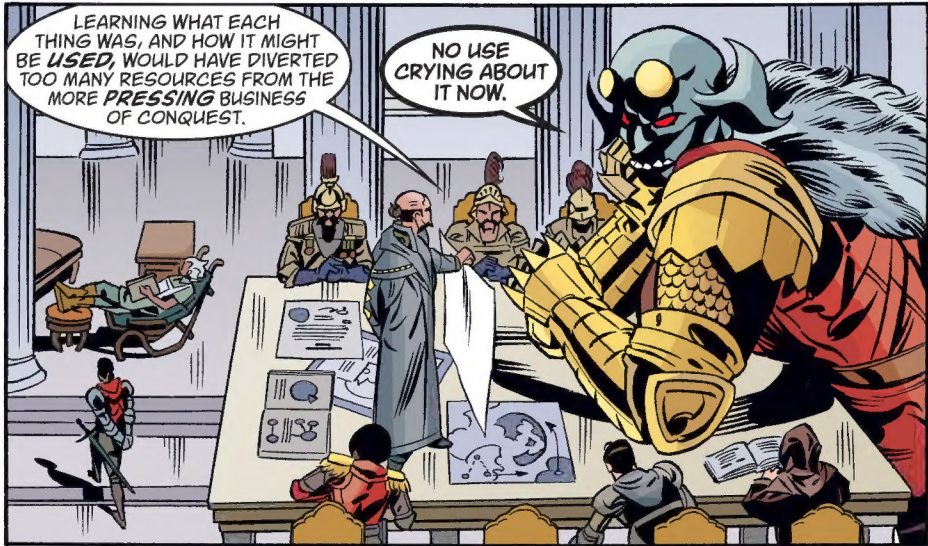
WE'VE PROBABLY GOT THEM, YOU KNOW. CENTURIES FROM NOW, SOME MINOR FUNCTIONARY WILL FIND AN ENTIRE CACHE OF THEM.

THEY'LL BE TUCKED AWAY IN A LONELY CORNER OF SOME ISOLATED STOCKPILE, IN SOME LITTLE BACKWATER PROVINCE, SOMEWHERE IN ALL THE VASTNESS OF OUR WORLDS.



I THINK WE LOCKED TOO MUCH MAGIC AWAY TOO QUICKLY IN THE EARLY YEARS, WITHOUT PROPER RECORD-KEEPING. SO, EFFECTIVELY, ALL OF THAT STUFF IS LOST.

IT WAS NECESSARY AT THE TIME. WE NEEDED TO REMOVE IT FROM THE GENERAL POPULACE MORE THAN WE NEEDED TO HAVE IT AVAILABLE FOR OUR OWN USE.



LEARNING WHAT EACH THING WAS, AND HOW IT MIGHT BE USED, WOULD HAVE DIVERTED TOO MANY RESOURCES FROM THE MORE PRESSING BUSINESS OF CONQUEST.

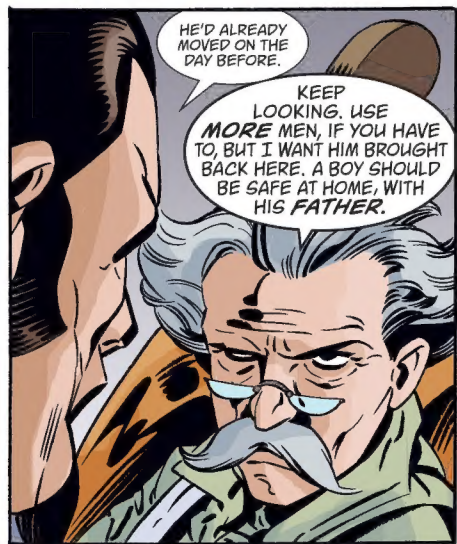
NO USE CRYING ABOUT IT NOW.



EXCUSE ME, SIR.

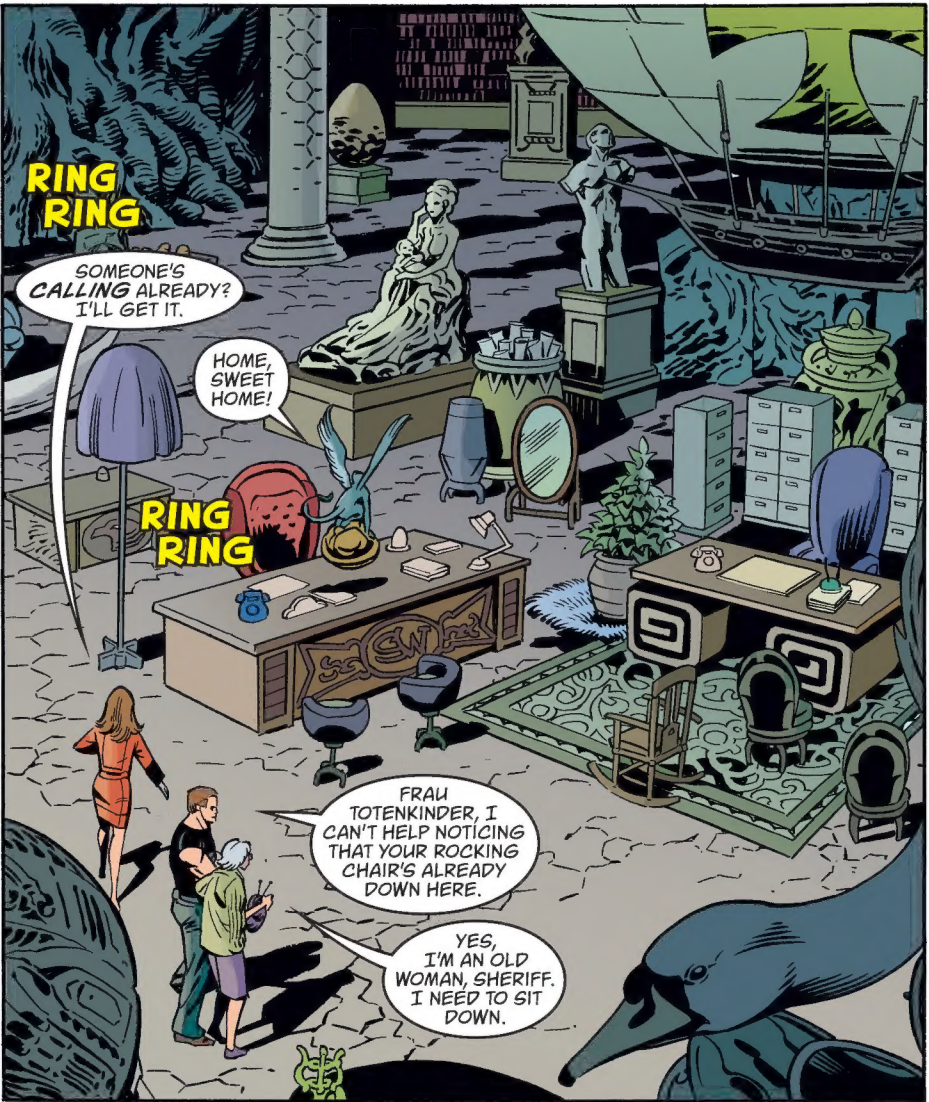
NRKK
SNORT
HUH?

WE HEARD A RUMOR THAT PINOCCHIO HAD BEEN STAYING AT AN INN JUST OUTSIDE OF GULL HARBOR. HE'D BEEN THERE ALL RIGHT, BUT WE ARRIVED TOO LATE.



HE'D ALREADY MOVED ON THE DAY BEFORE.

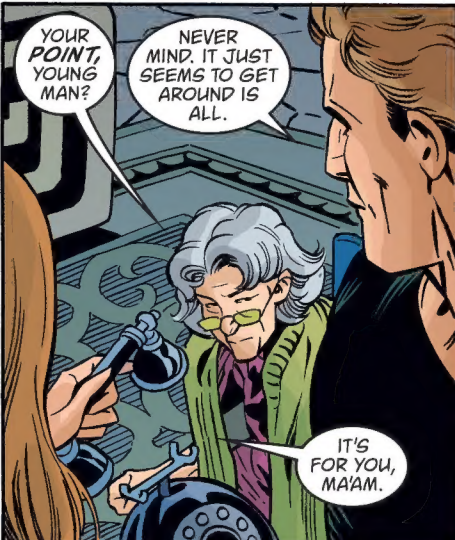
KEEP LOOKING. USE MORE MEN, IF YOU HAVE TO, BUT I WANT HIM BROUGHT BACK HERE. A BOY SHOULD BE SAFE AT HOME, WITH HIS FATHER.





SURE, BUT WE JUST LEFT YOUR ROCKER BEHIND IN PRINCE CHARMING'S PENTHOUSE, NOT TEN MINUTES AGO.

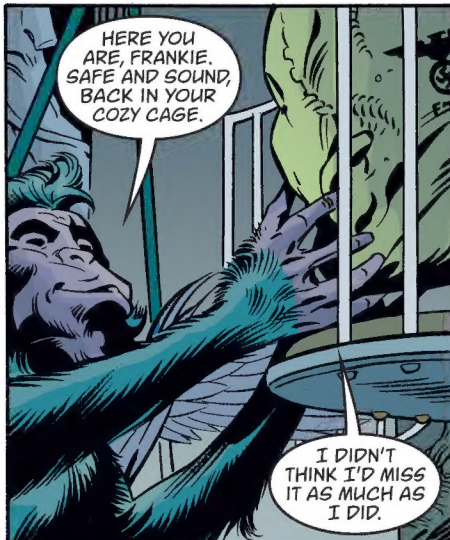
YET, HERE IT IS, HAVING SOMEHOW GOTTEN HERE BEFORE US.



YOUR POINT, YOUNG MAN?

NEVER MIND. IT JUST SEEMS TO GET AROUND IS ALL.

IT'S FOR YOU, MA'AM.



HERE YOU ARE, FRANKIE. SAFE AND SOUND, BACK IN YOUR COZY CAGE.

I DIDN'T THINK I'D MISS IT AS MUCH AS I DID.

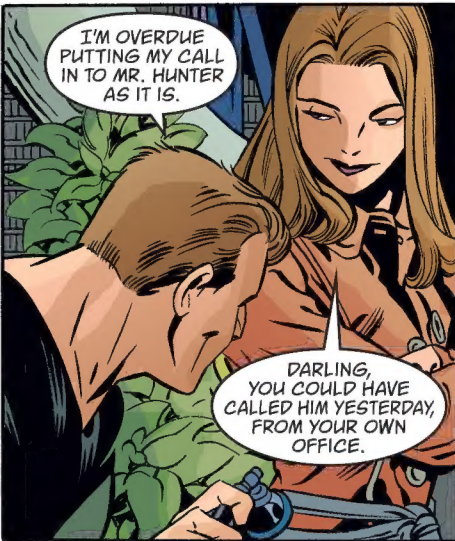


ALL OF THE ARMOR'S GONE. CLEANED UP REAL NICE. WHERE DID YOU FOLKS PUT IT, FRAU TOTENKINDER?

SHHHH! CAN'T YOU SEE I'M ON THE PHONE?

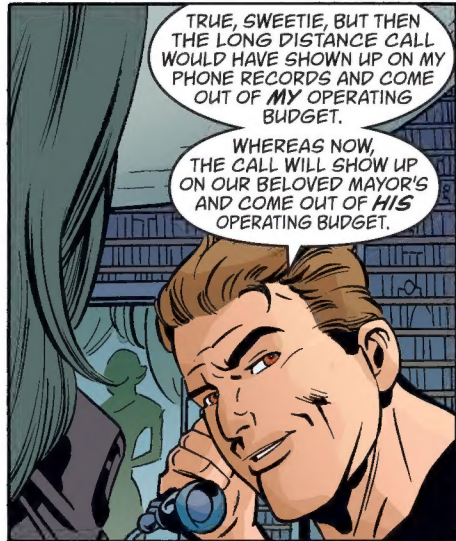


SORRY, MA'AM. I'D BETTER START WORKING THE PHONES MYSELF.



I'M OVERDUE PUTTING MY CALL IN TO MR. HUNTER AS IT IS.

DARLING, YOU COULD HAVE CALLED HIM YESTERDAY, FROM YOUR OWN OFFICE.



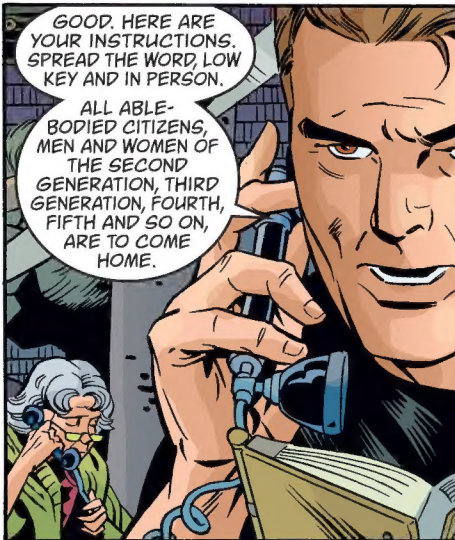
TRUE, SWEETIE, BUT THEN THE LONG DISTANCE CALL WOULD HAVE SHOWN UP ON MY PHONE RECORDS AND COME OUT OF MY OPERATING BUDGET.

WHEREAS NOW, THE CALL WILL SHOW UP ON OUR BELOVED MAYOR'S AND COME OUT OF HIS OPERATING BUDGET.



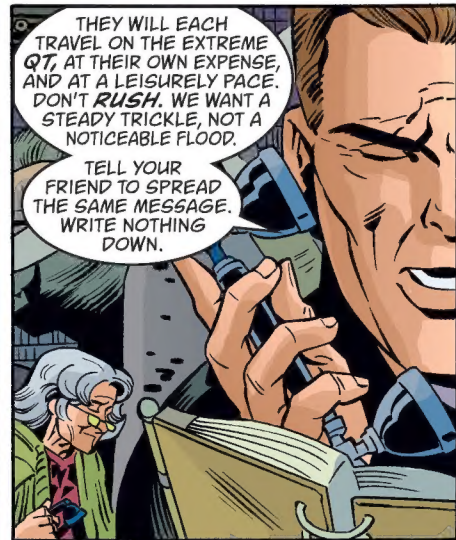
HELLO. DO YOU RECOGNIZE MY VOICE? GOOD. THIS IS AN UNSECURED LINE, SO DON'T REFER TO ME BY NAME.

LISTEN TO THE FOLLOWING WORDS: JERICO. POTLATCH. ARROW. WHEELBARROW. DO YOU AUTHENTICATE?



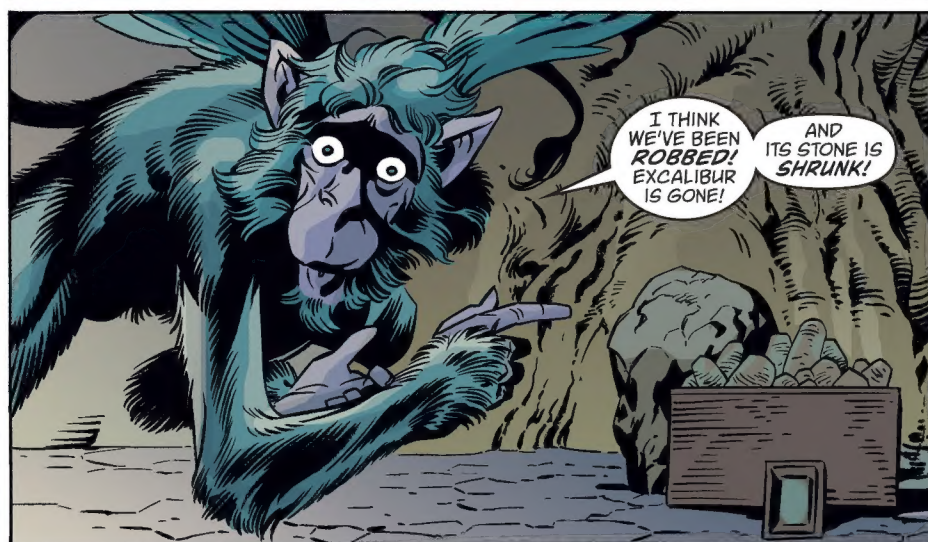
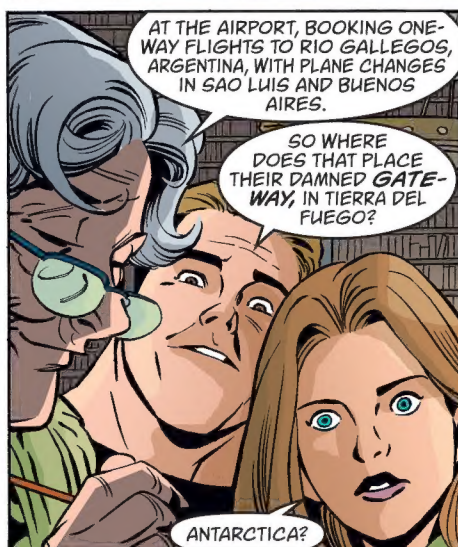
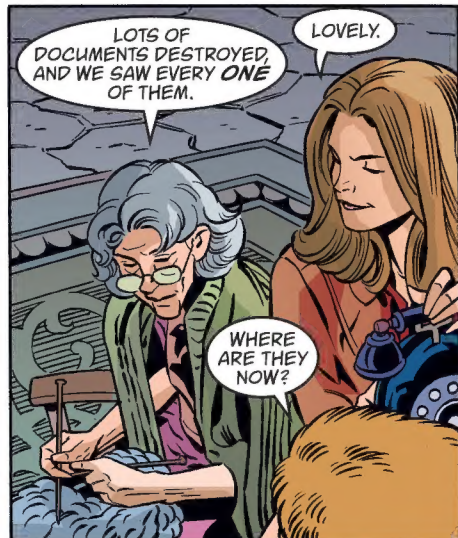
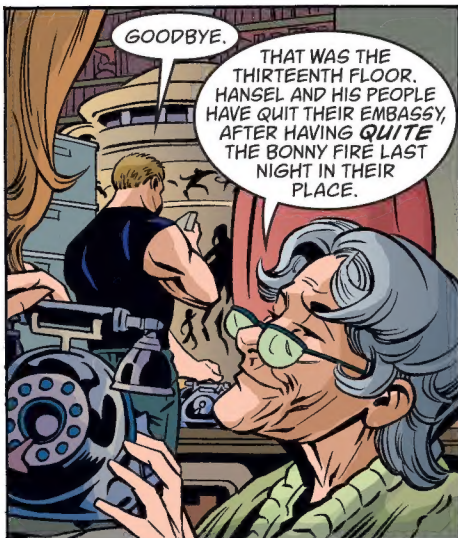
GOOD. HERE ARE YOUR INSTRUCTIONS. SPREAD THE WORD, LOW KEY AND IN PERSON.

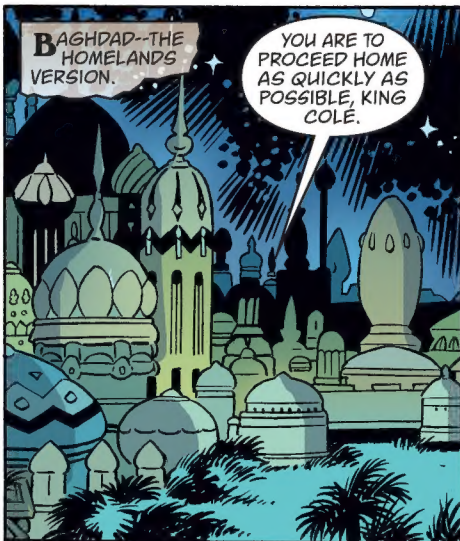
ALL ABLE-BODIED CITIZENS, MEN AND WOMEN OF THE SECOND GENERATION, THIRD GENERATION, FOURTH, FIFTH AND SO ON, ARE TO COME HOME.



THEY WILL EACH TRAVEL ON THE EXTREME QT, AT THEIR OWN EXPENSE, AND AT A LEISURELY PACE. DON'T RUSH. WE WANT A STEADY TRICKLE, NOT A NOTICEABLE FLOOD.

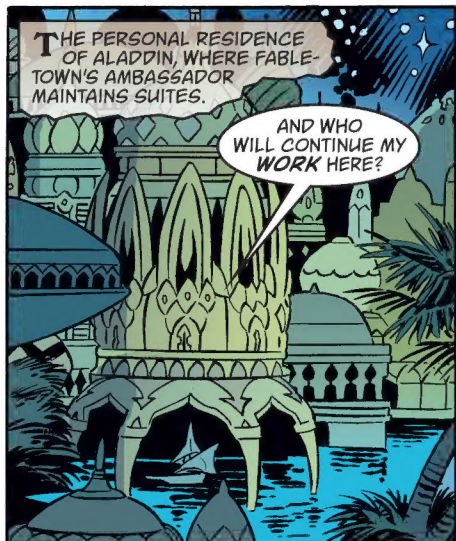
TELL YOUR FRIEND TO SPREAD THE SAME MESSAGE. WRITE NOTHING DOWN.





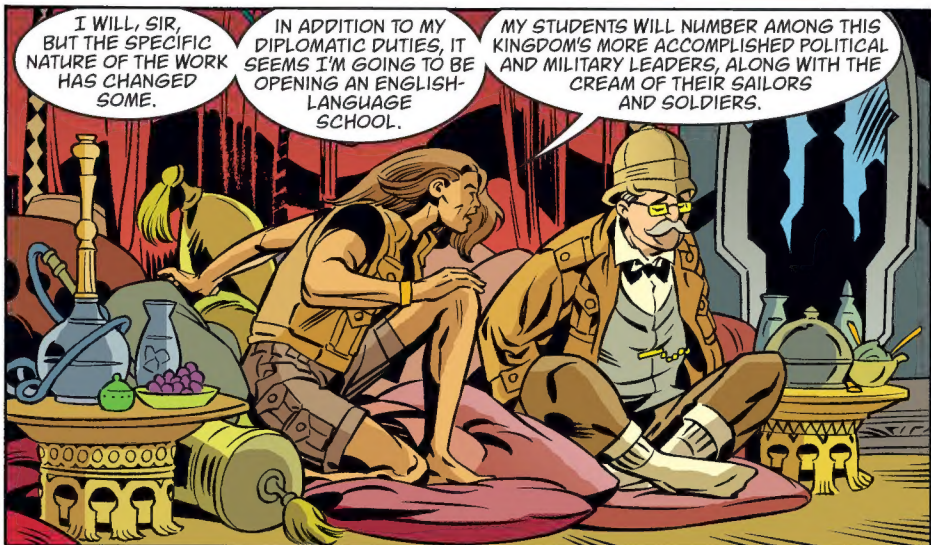
BAGHDAD--THE HOMELANDS VERSION.

YOU ARE TO PROCEED HOME AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, KING COLE.



THE PERSONAL RESIDENCE OF ALADDIN, WHERE FABLE-TOWN'S AMBASSADOR MAINTAINS SUITES.

AND WHO WILL CONTINUE MY WORK HERE?



I WILL, SIR, BUT THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF THE WORK HAS CHANGED SOME.

IN ADDITION TO MY DIPLOMATIC DUTIES, IT SEEMS I'M GOING TO BE OPENING AN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE SCHOOL.

MY STUDENTS WILL NUMBER AMONG THIS KINGDOM'S MORE ACCOMPLISHED POLITICAL AND MILITARY LEADERS, ALONG WITH THE CREAM OF THEIR SAILORS AND SOLDIERS.

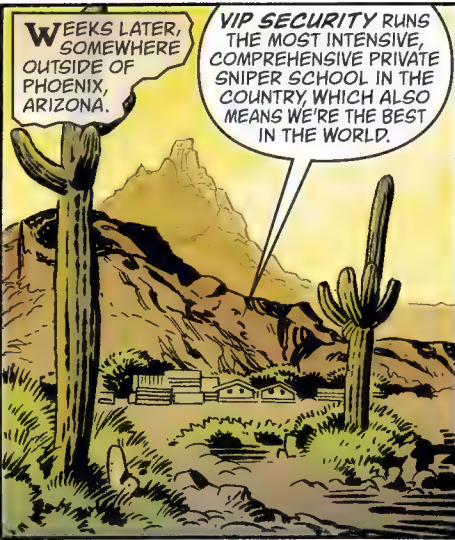


OH DEAR, MOWGLI. WE'RE AT WAR, AREN'T WE?



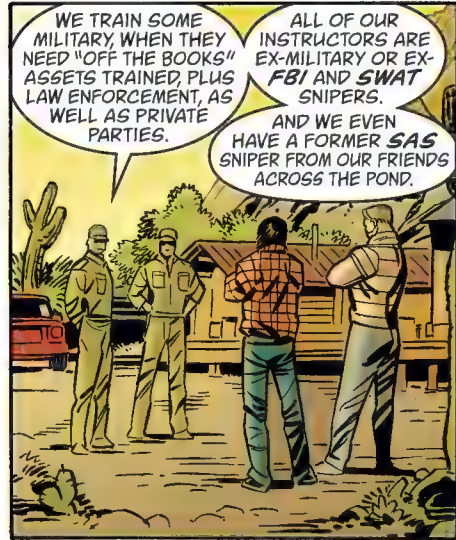
IF NOT NOW, THEN SOON. BUT THIS TIME WE HAVE POWERFUL ALLIES, HERE AND IN THE CLOUD KINGDOMS.

AND WE HAVE A SECRET WEAPONS PROJECT, WHICH I WILL BE PROPOSING TO OUR HOSTS.



WEEKS LATER, SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE OF PHOENIX, ARIZONA.

VIP SECURITY RUNS THE MOST INTENSIVE, COMPREHENSIVE PRIVATE SNIPER SCHOOL IN THE COUNTRY, WHICH ALSO MEANS WE'RE THE BEST IN THE WORLD.



WE TRAIN SOME MILITARY, WHEN THEY NEED "OFF THE BOOKS" ASSETS TRAINED, PLUS LAW ENFORCEMENT, AS WELL AS PRIVATE PARTIES.

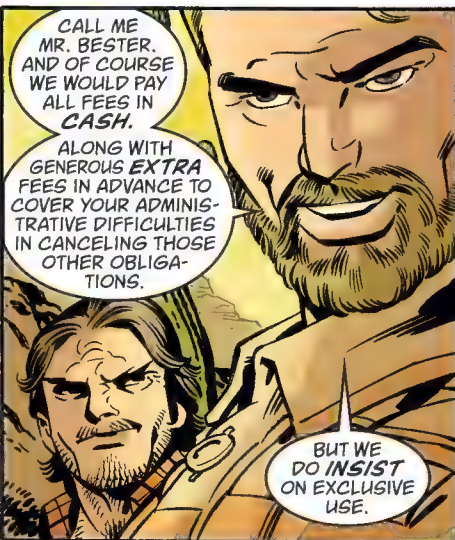
ALL OF OUR INSTRUCTORS ARE EX-MILITARY OR EX-FBI AND SWAT SNIPERS.

AND WE EVEN HAVE A FORMER SAS SNIPER FROM OUR FRIENDS ACROSS THE POND.



TERRIFIC. I REPRESENT A GROUP THAT WOULD LIKE TO RESERVE YOUR SERVICES FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS-- ALL SLOTS ON ALL CLASSES. EXCLUSIVE USE OF YOUR PERSONNEL AND FACILITIES.

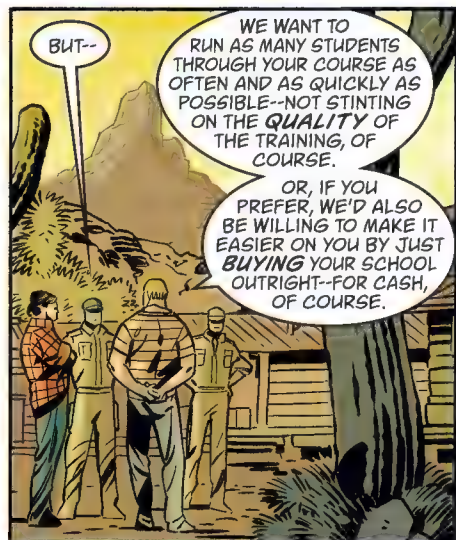
BUT, UHM--WELL, WE HAVE ONGOING OBLIGATIONS, AND, UHM--THAT WOULD BE VERY EXPENSIVE, MR. ...



CALL ME MR. BESTER. AND OF COURSE WE WOULD PAY ALL FEES IN CASH.

ALONG WITH GENEROUS EXTRA FEES IN ADVANCE TO COVER YOUR ADMINISTRATIVE DIFFICULTIES IN CANCELING THOSE OTHER OBLIGATIONS.

BUT WE DO INSIST ON EXCLUSIVE USE.



BUT--

WE WANT TO RUN AS MANY STUDENTS THROUGH YOUR COURSE AS OFTEN AND AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE--NOT STINTING ON THE QUALITY OF THE TRAINING, OF COURSE.

OR, IF YOU PREFER, WE'D ALSO BE WILLING TO MAKE IT EASIER ON YOU BY JUST BUYING YOUR SCHOOL OUTRIGHT--FOR CASH, OF COURSE.

B

B

A FEW DAYS LATER, OUTSIDE OF KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE...

"TOTAL CONFIDENCE INCORPORATED" IS A PRIVATE SPECIAL FORCES AND COMMANDO TRAINING SCHOOL.

WE TEACH SMALL UNIT TACTICS, UNARMED COMBAT, CLOSE-QUARTERS SMALL ARMS PROFICIENCY, VIP AND EXECUTIVE PROTECTION AND BODYGUARD TRAINING.

ALL OF OUR INSTRUCTORS ARE EX-SPECIAL FORCES, AMERICAN AND BRITISH MOSTLY, BUT TWO FORMER FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION AND ONE INSTRUCTOR FROM SOUTH AFRICAN--

YES, THAT'S ALL VERY GOOD. SO, HOW MANY STUDENTS CAN YOU TRAIN AND HOW QUICKLY?

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON.

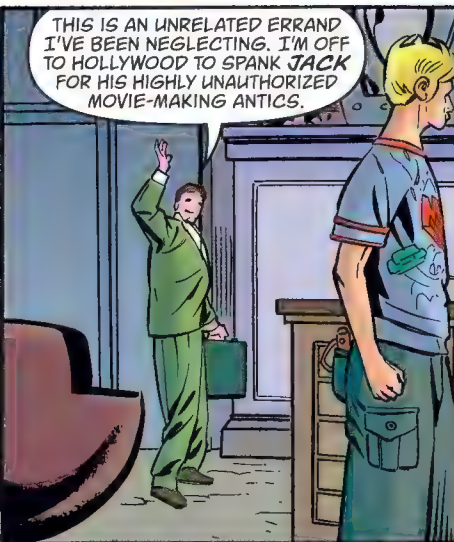
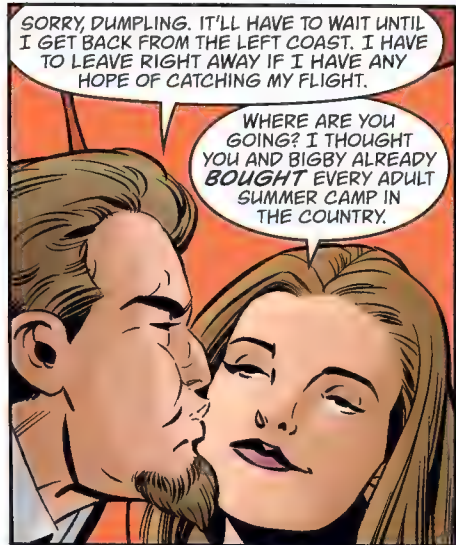
CALL ME MR. BESTER. I'M LOOKING FOR A SECURE LINE ON VARIOUS MILITARY GRADE SMALL ARMS, INCLUDING PORTABLE MISSILE ORDNANCE.

ALL STRICTLY OFF THE BOOKS, OF COURSE.

AND WE'D ALSO BE INTERESTED IN OBTAINING A MOAB OR TWO. YOU KNOW, THE MASSIVE ORDNANCE AIR-BLASTED BOMB? I BELIEVE ITS MILITARY DESIGNATION IS GBU-43/B?

BUT THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE. THOSE ARE THE LARGEST CONVENTIONAL BOMBS IN THE WORLD. NO ONE CAN GET THOSE!

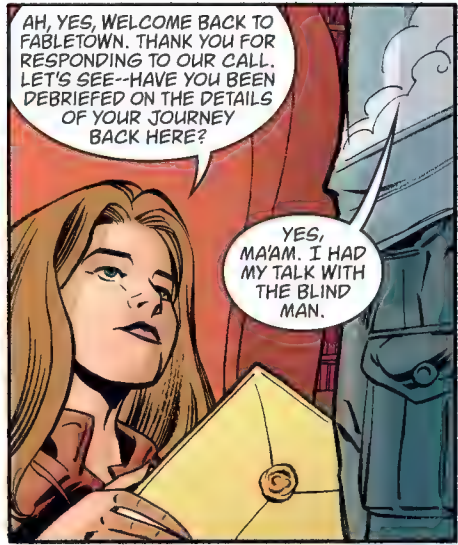
FAIR ENOUGH. THEN WHAT ABOUT ONE OF THEIR SMALLER *COUSINS* CALLED BUNKER BUSTERS?





I APOLOGIZE FOR THE INTERRUPTION, MR. CEDARHORN. WHERE WERE WE?

UHM, YOU WERE SAYING WELCOME TO--



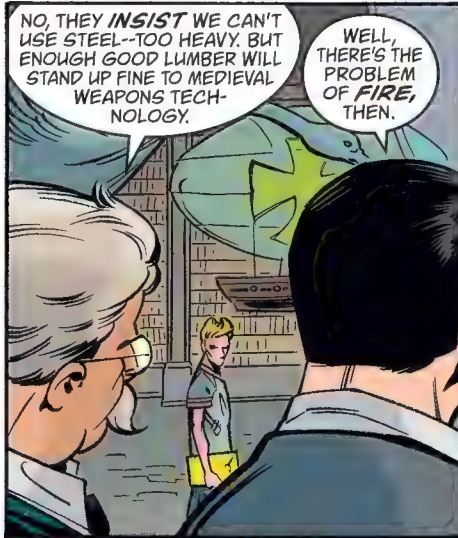
AH, YES, WELCOME BACK TO FABLETOWN. THANK YOU FOR RESPONDING TO OUR CALL. LET'S SEE--HAVE YOU BEEN DEBRIEFED ON THE DETAILS OF YOUR JOURNEY BACK HERE?

YES, MA'AM. I HAD MY TALK WITH THE BLIND MAN.



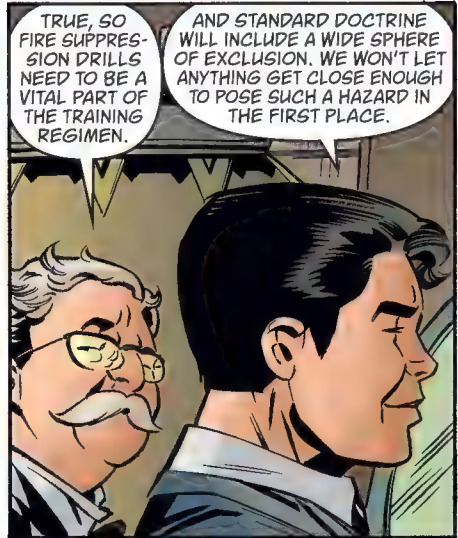
GREAT. THEN YOU'LL RIDE UP TO THE FARM IN TODAY'S TRUCK. KEEP THESE DOCUMENTS WITH YOU, AND YOU'RE ALLOWED ONE BAG OF CLOTHING AND PERSONAL ITEMS.

IF YOU'LL WAIT OUT IN THE FRONT COURTYARD, THE TRUCK SHOULD BE LEAVING WITHIN THE HOUR.



NO, THEY *INSIST* WE CAN'T USE STEEL--TOO HEAVY. BUT ENOUGH GOOD LUMBER WILL STAND UP FINE TO MEDIEVAL WEAPONS TECHNOLOGY.

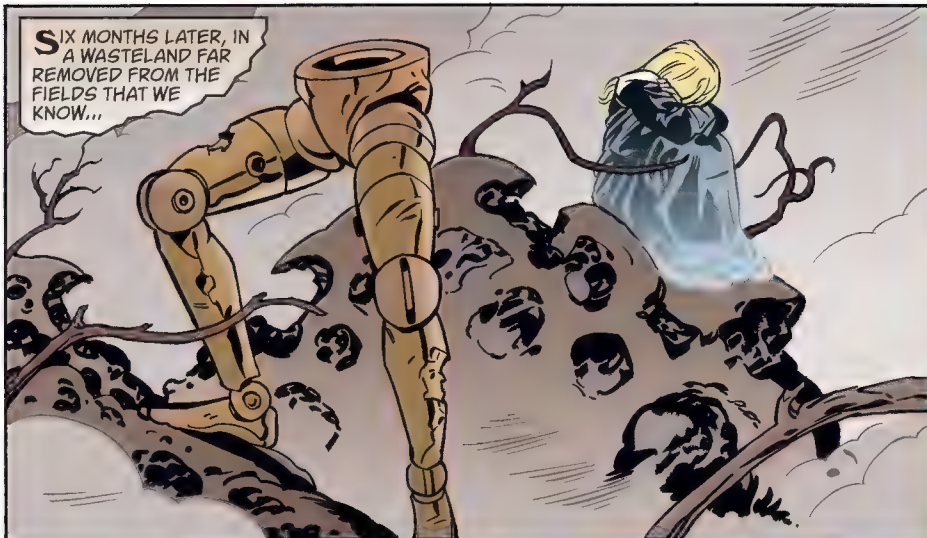
WELL, THERE'S THE PROBLEM OF *FIRE*, THEN.



TRUE, SO FIRE SUPPRESSION DRILLS NEED TO BE A VITAL PART OF THE TRAINING REGIMEN.

AND STANDARD DOCTRINE WILL INCLUDE A WIDE SPHERE OF EXCLUSION. WE WON'T LET ANYTHING GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO POSE SUCH A HAZARD IN THE FIRST PLACE.

SIX MONTHS LATER, IN A WASTELAND FAR REMOVED FROM THE FIELDS THAT WE KNOW...

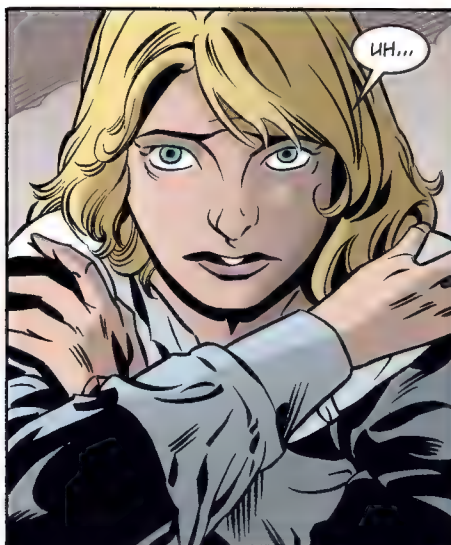


EXCUSE ME, MISS?

YOU WOULDN'T BE GRETEL, WOULD YOU?



UH...



I THINK SO.

I'M NOT SURE. IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE ANYONE CALLED ME ANYTHING.



MY NAME IS LANCELOT AND I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU FOR A LONG TIME.

I WONDER IF YOU'D LIKE TO COME WITH ME.





TIME PASSES...

HOW FAR ARE WE GOING?

I'M NOT ENTIRELY SURE. TIME AND DISTANCE GET A BIT /FFY IN THIS PLACE.



BUT I KNOW THE WAY BACK TO MY BOSS. HE SORT OF HAS AN INVISIBLE STRING ATTACHED TO ME THAT LEADS ME BACK TO HIM.

WHAT DOES HE WANT WITH ME?



I BELIEVE HE'S GOT A FAVOR TO ASK OF YOU, AND SOME GIFTS TO OFFER IN RETURN.

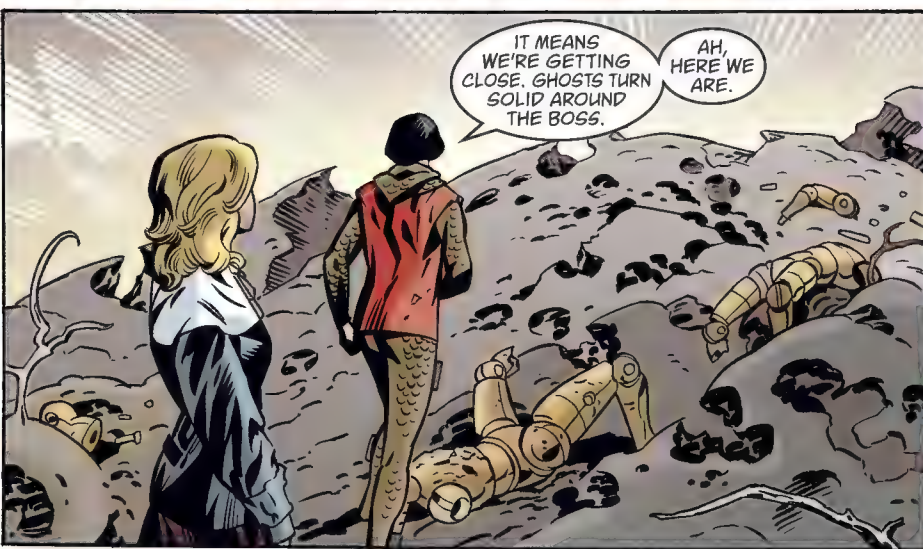
NOT *JUST* YOU. EVERYONE TRAPPED DOWN HERE. BUT YOU'RE THE LAST WE KNOW OF. YOU MANAGED TO WANDER FAR AWAY OVER THE CENTURIES.



MR. LANCELOT, I--

--I THINK I'M FEELING--I'VE NEVER FELT ANYTHING *PHYSICAL* DOWN HERE, BUT NOW I'M...

...IT'S HARD TO REMEMBER, BUT I THINK I FEEL *HUNGRY*.



IT MEANS WE'RE GETTING CLOSE. GHOSTS TURN SOLID AROUND THE BOSS.

AH, HERE WE ARE.

GHOSTS OF THE LAND BELOW THE WELL. SOME OF YOU MAY REMEMBER ME FROM YOUR DAYS AMONG THE LIVING. MY NAME IS **AMBROSE** AND I'M A PRINCE OF A DISTANT LAND.

MOST OF YOU HAVE BEEN TRAPPED DOWN HERE FOR **CENTURIES**. SOME LESS SO, BUT ALL OF YOU HAVE SUFFERED LONG ENOUGH.

THIS DISMAL LAND IS A DEAD PLACE, IN **EVERY** SENSE OF THE WORD. NOTHING FINDS NEW LIFE HERE. NO ONE ESCAPES THIS LAND-- UNTIL NOW.

I'M THE FIRST TO SURVIVE THE TRIP DOWN THE WELL. I'M THE FIRST TO SUCCESSFULLY JOURNEY **LIVING** TO THIS PLACE OF ABSOLUTE **DEATH**. I'VE BROKEN ITS POWER FOR A TIME.

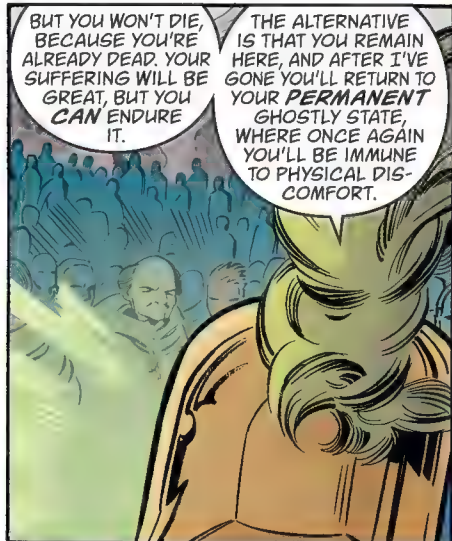
I'VE COME TO LEAD YOU AWAY, BACK TO FIELDS OF LIGHT AND BEAUTY. I CAN'T RETURN YOU TO LIFE, BUT WHILE YOU'RE WITH ME, YOU'LL BE **WHOLE**-- JUST AS IF YOU WERE STILL LIVING.

IN RETURN YOU'LL BE MY **ARMY**--A HOST OF SPIRITS MADE FLESH AGAIN. IF YOU SERVE ME FAITHFULLY, IN TIME I'LL RELEASE YOU TO CONTINUE ON TO WHATEVER REWARDS AWAIT.



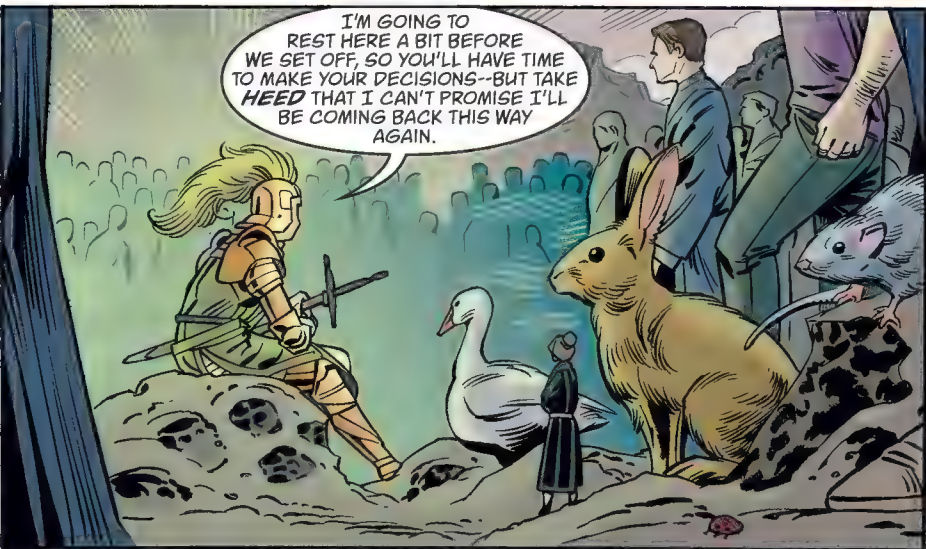
WE HAVE A LONG JOURNEY AHEAD OF US, AND WEEKS OR PERHAPS **MONTHS** BEFORE WE'LL EMERGE TO A PLACE WHERE ANYTHING CAN LIVE AND GROW.

SO, I WARN YOU IN ADVANCE THERE'LL BE **HARD-SHIPS**. YOU'LL **HUNGER** AND HAVE NOTHING TO EAT. YOU'LL **THIRST** AND FIND NOTHING TO DRINK.

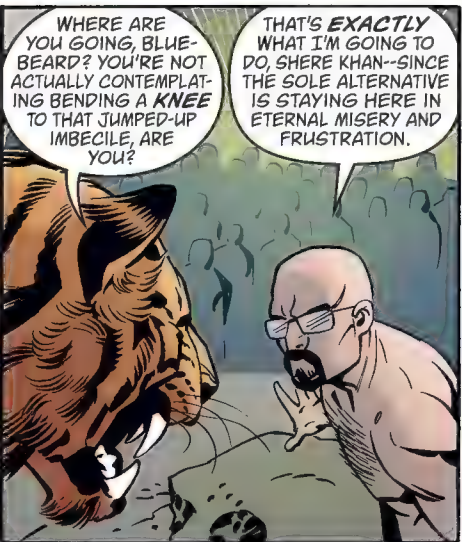


BUT YOU WON'T DIE, BECAUSE YOU'RE ALREADY DEAD. YOUR SUFFERING WILL BE GREAT, BUT YOU **CAN** ENDURE IT.

THE ALTERNATIVE IS THAT YOU REMAIN HERE, AND AFTER I'VE GONE YOU'LL RETURN TO YOUR **PERMANENT** GHOSTLY STATE, WHERE ONCE AGAIN YOU'LL BE IMMUNE TO PHYSICAL DIS-COMFORT.

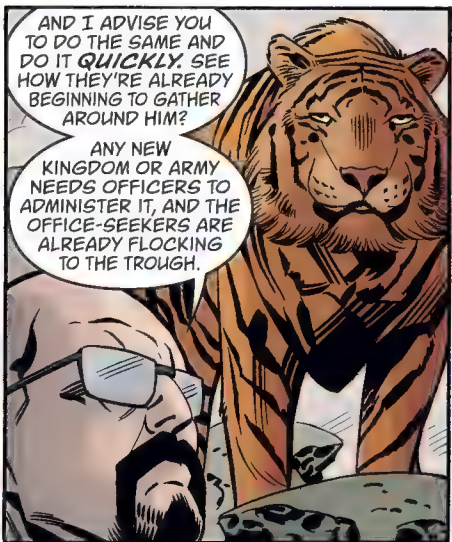


I'M GOING TO REST HERE A BIT BEFORE WE SET OFF, SO YOU'LL HAVE TIME TO MAKE YOUR DECISIONS--BUT TAKE **HEED** THAT I CAN'T PROMISE I'LL BE COMING BACK THIS WAY AGAIN.



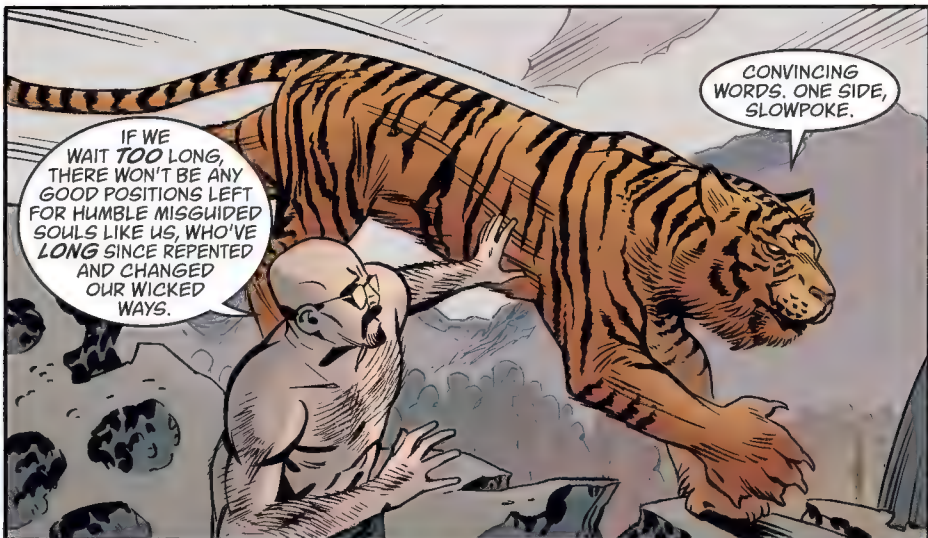
WHERE ARE YOU GOING, BLUE-BEARD? YOU'RE NOT ACTUALLY CONTEMPLATING BENDING A **KNEE** TO THAT JUMPED-UP IMBECILE, ARE YOU?

THAT'S **EXACTLY** WHAT I'M GOING TO DO, SHERE KHAN--SINCE THE SOLE ALTERNATIVE IS STAYING HERE IN ETERNAL MISERY AND FRUSTRATION.



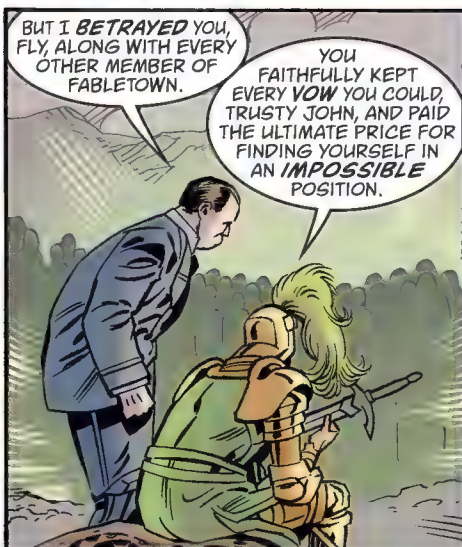
AND I ADVISE YOU TO DO THE SAME AND DO IT **QUICKLY**. SEE HOW THEY'RE ALREADY BEGINNING TO GATHER AROUND HIM?

ANY NEW KINGDOM OR ARMY NEEDS OFFICERS TO ADMINISTER IT, AND THE OFFICE-SEEKERS ARE ALREADY FLOCKING TO THE TROUGH.



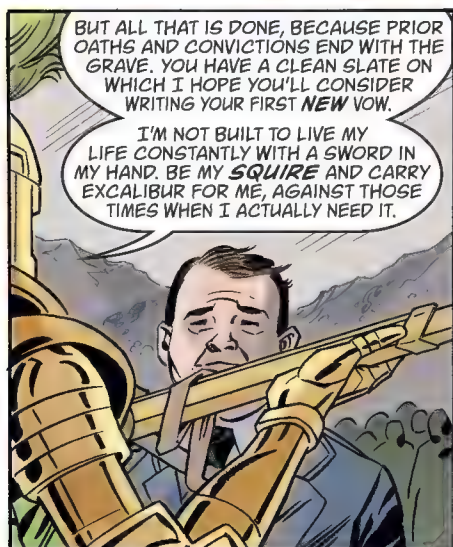
IF WE WAIT **TOO LONG**, THERE WON'T BE ANY **GOOD POSITIONS** LEFT FOR **HUMBLE MISGUIDED SOULS** LIKE US, WHO'VE **LONG SINCE REPENTED** AND **CHANGED OUR WICKED WAYS**.

CONVINCING WORDS, ONE SIDE, SLOWPOKE.



BUT I **BETRAYED** YOU, FLY, ALONG WITH EVERY OTHER MEMBER OF **FABLETOWN**.

YOU **FAITHFULLY KEPT EVERY VOW** YOU COULD, **TRUSTY JOHN**, AND PAID THE **ULTIMATE PRICE** FOR FINDING YOURSELF IN AN **IMPOSSIBLE POSITION**.



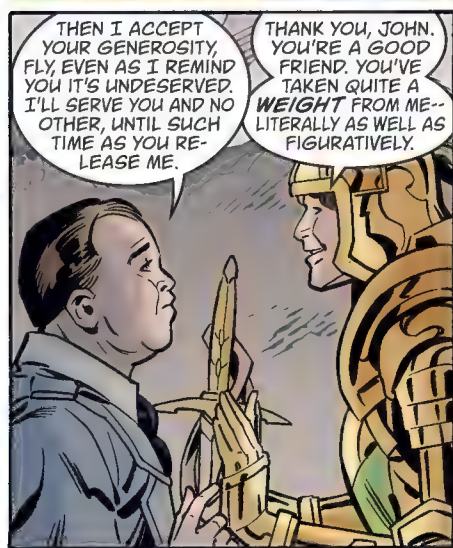
BUT ALL THAT IS DONE, BECAUSE **PRIOR OATHS AND CONVICTIONS** END WITH THE **GRAVE**. YOU HAVE A **CLEAN SLATE** ON WHICH I HOPE YOU'LL CONSIDER **WRITING YOUR FIRST NEW VOW**.

I'M NOT BUILT TO LIVE MY LIFE CONSTANTLY WITH A **SWORD** IN MY HAND. BE MY **SQUIRE** AND CARRY **EXCALIBUR** FOR ME, AGAINST THOSE TIMES WHEN I ACTUALLY NEED IT.



BUT ISN'T **LANCELOT** MORE **QUALIFIED** TO--?

LANCE WILL SERVE IN OTHER WAYS. HE'S TO BE MY **ENVOY** TO A **GREAT EMPIRE** AND THE **VOICE** OF OUR **NEW KINGDOM** IN THEIR **COURTS**.



THEN I **ACCEPT** YOUR **GENEROSITY**, FLY, EVEN AS I REMIND YOU IT'S **UNDESERVED**. I'LL SERVE YOU AND NO OTHER, UNTIL SUCH TIME AS YOU **RE-LEASE** ME.

THANK YOU, JOHN. YOU'RE A **GOOD FRIEND**. YOU'VE TAKEN QUITE A **WEIGHT** FROM ME-- **LITERALLY** AS WELL AS **FIGURATIVELY**.





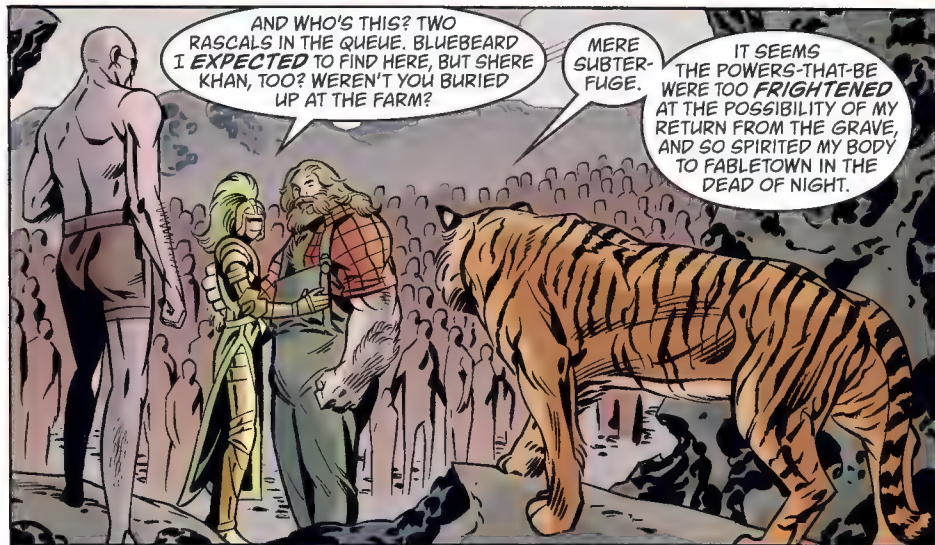
AND NOW WEYLAND! I'M OVERJOYED TO SEE YOU AGAIN!

YOU, TOO, FLYCATCHER! YOU, TOO!



AND I'M *ASTOUNDED* AT THIS CHANGE IN YOU. WELL DONE! BRILLIANT! NOW, WHAT'S MY DUTY TO BE?

YOUR JOB'S MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL. I NEED THE WORLD'S GREATEST BUILDER TO RESTORE SOME LONG DEAD STONES TO LIFE.



AND WHO'S THIS? TWO RASCALS IN THE QUEUE. BLUEBEARD I EXPECTED TO FIND HERE, BUT SHERE KHAN, TOO? WEREN'T YOU BURIED UP AT THE FARM?

MERE SUBTER-FUGE.

IT SEEMS THE POWERS-THAT-BE WERE TOO *FRIGHTENED* AT THE POSSIBILITY OF MY RETURN FROM THE GRAVE, AND SO SPIRITED MY BODY TO FABLETOWN IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT.



BUT ALL THAT'S IN THE PAST, NOBLE LORD. EVEN THE GREATEST SULTAN RECOGNIZES HIS BETTER WHEN HE AT LAST COMES ALONG.

I'LL SERVE.

ME TOO, FLYCATCHER. YEARS OF TORMENT DOWN HERE HAVE TAUGHT ME THE *ERROR* OF MY WAYS. I'M TRULY TRANSFORMED INTO A SHADE OF VIRTUE.



THEN I ACCEPT YOU BOTH INTO MY SERVICE.

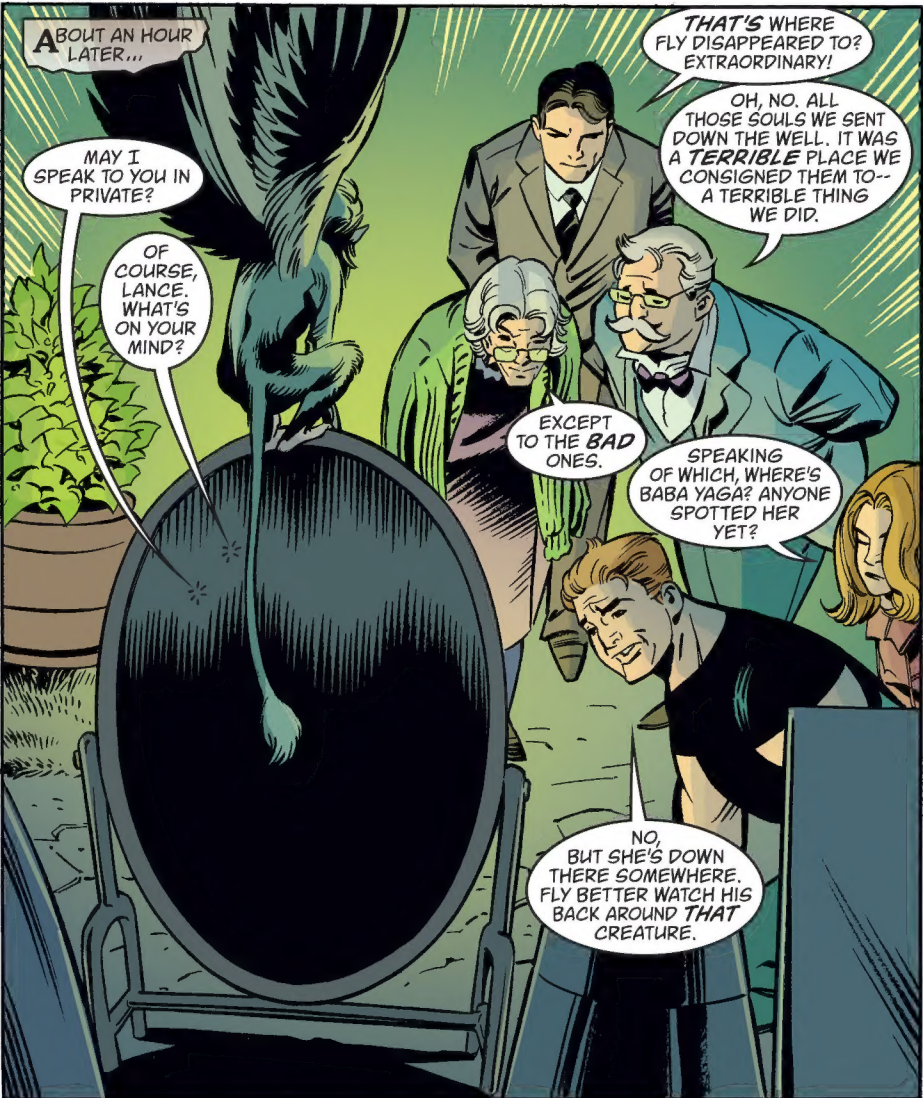


...ACCEPT YOU BOTH INTO MY SERVICE.

OH MY.



BEAUTY! BEAST! MR. TERRIBLE NASTY MAYOR! I THINK YOU NEED TO SEE THIS!



ABOUT AN HOUR LATER...

MAY I SPEAK TO YOU IN PRIVATE?

OF COURSE, LANCE. WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

THAT'S WHERE FLY DISAPPEARED TO? EXTRAORDINARY!

OH, NO. ALL THOSE SOULS WE SENT DOWN THE WELL. IT WAS A TERRIBLE PLACE WE CONSIGNED THEM TO-- A TERRIBLE THING WE DID.

EXCEPT TO THE BAD ONES.

SPEAKING OF WHICH, WHERE'S BABA YAGA? ANYONE SPOTTED HER YET?

NO BUT SHE'S DOWN THERE SOMEWHERE. FLY BETTER WATCH HIS BACK AROUND THAT CREATURE.

B

B



MAY I SPEAK PLAINLY, BOSS?

OF COURSE, LANCE. ALWAYS. YOUR COUNSEL WOULDN'T BE WORTH MUCH IF IT WASN'T ENTIRELY CANDID. WHAT'S GOT YOU SO DOUR?



SOME OF THE DECISIONS YOU'RE MAKING DISTURB ME. REGARDLESS OF WHAT THEY SAY, SHERE KHAN AND BLUEBEARD ARE STILL VILLAINS.

THEIR UNDIMINISHED AVARICE IS OBVIOUS FOR ANYONE TO SEE.



OH, I KNOW THAT WELL ENOUGH--AND MORE. THEY PLAN TO BETRAY ME AT THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY. BUT LOOK AT YOUR NEW TESTAMENT.

JUDAS WAS REQUIRED FOR ALL OF THOSE EVENTS TO TURN OUT THE WAY THEY NEEDED TO. OUR TWO VILLAINS HAVE THEIR PARTS TO PLAY.



AND WHAT ABOUT TRUSTING EXCALIBUR TO THE KEEPING OF A RECENT TRAITOR?

JOHN ONLY BROKE ONE OATH BECAUSE IT CONFLICTED WITH A PREVIOUS ONE. HE'LL REMAIN TRUE TO ME. YOU'LL SEE PLENTY OF EVIDENCE FOR THAT, BEFORE ALL IS DONE.



AND I DON'T WANT TO GET IN THE HABIT OF CARRYING SUCH A POWERFUL WEAPON. OTHERWISE IT MIGHT TEMPT ME TO DO THIS THE EASY WAY, WITH GREAT AND MORTAL BATTLES.

INSTEAD, I THINK I'M GOING TO TRY TO DO THIS ANOTHER, MUCH HARDER WAY. PROBABLY WON'T WORK OUT, BUT WE'LL SEE.

NEXT: The Harder Way



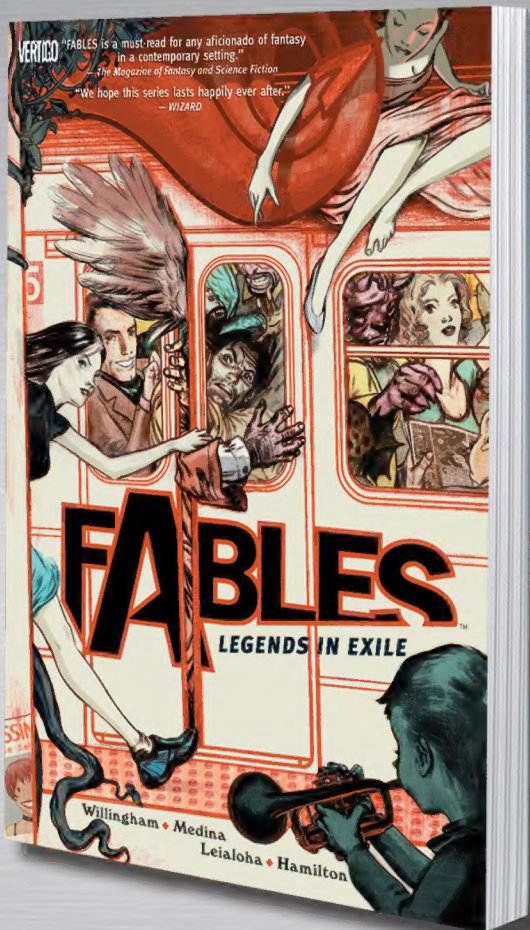
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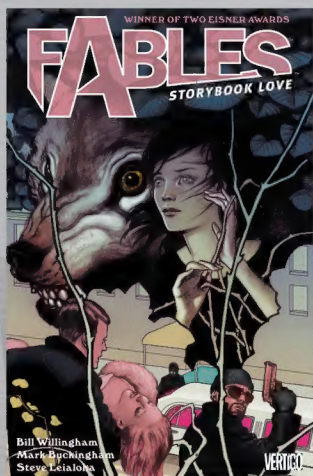
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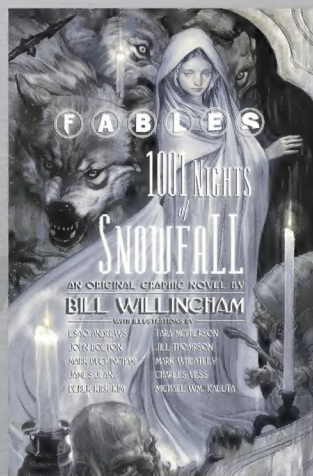
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